

Humanities and Social Sciences literature review

Senior syllabus redevelopment

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Executive summary

Syllabuses comprising the Humanities and Social Science subject group

Authority syllabuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancient History 2004• Geography 2007• Modern History 2004• Philosophy and Reason 2014• Study of Religion 2012• Study of Society 2012
Authority-registered syllabuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religion and Ethics 2014• Social and Community Studies 2014
VET qualifications	n/a

Overview of methodology and findings

A review of the international literature was conducted and an environmental scan was undertaken of the following Australian jurisdictions and international syllabus documents. The international jurisdictions were chosen as they are high performing and utilise internal and external assessment.

Australian jurisdictions: New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia

Where applicable, the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) Senior syllabus documents in Geography, Ancient History and Modern History were also consulted.

International

- Ontario, Canada — Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education (EDU) is the ministry of the Ontario Government in the Canadian province of Ontario responsible for government policy, funding, curriculum planning and direction in all levels of public education, including elementary and secondary schools.
- International Baccalaureate: The International Baccalaureate (IB) is an internationally recognised pre-university course designed for highly motivated secondary students aged between 16 and 19. The program is available to domestic and international students. Students completing the IB Diploma curriculum receive an IB score, which is translated by university admission centres for entry into university courses. It is currently offered to one million students in more than 146 countries.
- AQA, United Kingdom (formally known as Assessment and Qualifications Alliance): AQA is an awarding body in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It compiles specifications and holds examinations in various subjects at GCSE, AS and A Level and offers vocational qualifications.

Findings

Collectively, all investigated Humanities and Social Sciences syllabus documents promote inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning, the development of critical and higher-order thinking and a connection to the real world by becoming responsible and active citizens. These elements were configured and emphasised differently within individual syllabus documents according to system contexts and priorities. All jurisdictions chart and link assessment to course content. Assessment varies across jurisdictions in terms of specific weightings and emphasis, but in broad terms incorporates a range of instruments and blend of internal and external assessment methods. While most syllabus documents provide some opportunities for choice in terms of school-based tailoring of courses to suit student needs/interests, Queensland authority and authority-registered subjects permit greater opportunities for school-based translation of the syllabus. Enabling school-based curriculum development within syllabus guidelines is seen as a strength of the Queensland syllabuses under review.

Summary of recommendations

It is recommended that the principles and practice of school-based curriculum development in Queensland senior syllabuses continue so that those mandated and significant parts of a syllabus that support and facilitate inquiry-based teaching and learning can be implemented in a manner that meets the needs of schools and students. It is also recommended that syllabus within this subject group align assessment with teaching and learning, balance internal and external assessment requirements and include a range of assessment tasks.

The following inquiry processes identified across the reviewed syllabus documents and identified in the international literature (in subject-specific variations and accompanying terminology) are recommended within the context of the specific discipline areas:

- *Knowledge and understanding*
 - knowledge of content
 - understanding of content
- *Thinking and reasoning*
 - use of questioning skills
 - use of planning skills
 - use of processing skills
 - use of critical/creative and reflective thinking processes

- *Communication*
 - expression and organisation of ideas and information in oral, visual, and/or written forms
 - communication for different audiences and purposes in oral, visual, and/or written forms
 - use of conventions, vocabulary, and terminology of the discipline in oral, visual, and/or written forms
 - use of ICTs
- *Application*
 - application of knowledge and skills in familiar contexts
 - transfer of knowledge and skills to new contexts
 - making connections within and between various contexts.

All syllabuses need to incorporate inquiry-based learning according to the syntax of the relevant discipline and foster the development of subject-specific conceptual understandings. This emphasis should also include a research component so that students in Years 11 and 12 have the opportunity to conduct independent and collaborative (in small groups) inquiry tasks that require engagement with a range of digital and print sources during their investigation. Where appropriate, such as in Study of Society (2012), Social and Community Studies (2014) and Study of Religion (2012), for example, students would also conduct research with human and community resources, and as in the case of Geography (2007), the human and physical environments. Students can present their findings in a range of multimodal formats using digital technologies as well as more traditional expository essays/reports.

1 Subject group: Significant emerging trends

1.1 Assessment

Most jurisdictions that employ external assessment methods also include a component of school-based assessment from Year 12 (or the equivalent) and hold external examinations at Year 12 level. Student summative assessment in Year 11 is mostly internally assessed and does not contribute in a summative sense to the final result. All jurisdictions align assessment with course content, and include a range of tasks that reflect the course content and dimensions. Such formative and summative assessment vary from multimodal oral and written tasks that incorporate digital and print texts to more traditional genres of research-based assignments, reports, expository and argumentative essays and also brief sets of questions incorporating multiple choice responses. In Senior Ancient History and Senior Modern History assessment tasks can also include short and extended answers in relation to questions and hypotheses about seen and unseen primary and secondary sources. It is recommended that the current principles (in QCAA Senior syllabuses) of balancing the objectives, assessment tasks, conditions and criteria over the two-year course of study and making judgements about student achievement based on the fullest and latest information available are maintained.

From both the national and international literature, assessment in the Humanities and Social Science subject group should:

- include a range of assessment items for the relevant subject area
 - **Ancient History:** The common types of assessment across the jurisdictions include short answer, extended written responses, source-based objective responses and exams.
 - **Geography:** The common types of assessment across the jurisdictions include short answer, extended responses, fieldwork/research reports/geographical investigations, multimedia/oral presentations, and exams. Victoria and the IB include data response exercises. The IB and the United Kingdom's AQA include multiple-choice assessment as part of their external component. Victoria also allows for roleplays.
 - **Modern History:** The common types of assessment across the jurisdictions include source-based analysis, short answer, extended responses and exams. Victoria is the jurisdiction that allows for the most choice offering assessment items such as historical re-enactments, website construction, dramatic presentations, scrapbooks and journals among others.
 - **Philosophy:** In the jurisdictions that offer this subject, the common assessments include essays, short answer, tests, reflections and presentations. For the most part, the external component takes the form of an exam. For the IB, for example, this exam could be essays, short answer, data response, case study questions and multiple choice. These types of

assessment instruments for the IB in this subject tend to extend to the other subjects in this field of study.

- **Study of Religion:** Where this subject is studied the internal component takes a variety of forms including: oral presentations, written reports, research reports and source analysis. The external component is an exam for the most part. Victoria again offers more choice including interviews, debates and annotated charts.
- **Study of Society:** Where this subject is offered, common assessments include short answer, extended responses, depth studies and exams.
- **Religion and Ethics and Social and Community Studies** are not offered in any other jurisdictions.
- encompass a balance of school-based assessment and external assessment procedures:
 - Across most of the jurisdictions, there is a balance between internal and external components of assessment with mainly a 50:50 split in most subject areas. The external components for the most part are exams, but these exams can take many forms such as tests, essays or short answer. The only exception to this is the United Kingdom where most of the assessment is 100% external. An exception to this is Geography AS/A level, which has an internally moderated piece of assessment.
- encompass a balance of school-based assessment and external assessment procedures
- assess knowledge, (including significant concepts related to the discipline/or subject), understanding and skills and be described at different levels of achievement/attainment. Standard descriptors/descriptions of achievement criteria must be included
- include both assessment for and of learning (formative and summative)
- include multi-modal approaches to communication and embedding ICTs including GIS (for Geography) in assessment
- for Geography, specifically a fieldwork component should be included
- for Ancient History and Modern History, incorporate specific questions about primary and secondary sources, and questions about historiography in the context of inquiry-based depth-studies (conducted over a minimum period of 18 timetabled school hours).

1.2 Pedagogical approaches

From both the national and international literature and syllabuses review, pedagogical approaches should focus on:

- inquiry-based learning, critical and creative thinking (higher order), problem solving and reflection on learning
- skills that are valuable for further study and work

- concepts of disciplinary thinking as well as topic/content knowledge
- collaborative/teamwork and independent approaches to research and learning
- constructivist approaches to teaching and learning
- use of modern technologies including blended approaches/flipped classroom
- learning experiences that foster social and cross cultural skill development
- experiential learning including fieldwork.

1.3 Implications for the revision of Queensland syllabuses

At present, Queensland has a school-based moderation/assessment system. Current trends pointing towards a balance between school-based and external assessment will have significant implications for the revision of syllabuses and assessment processes and procedures.

Assessment instruments need to be tried and tested, that is piloted for validity and reliability. This will incur costs for the production of assessments, moderation of assessments and marking.

Procedures for comparability/scaling mechanisms will need to be developed to ensure validity/reliability. This will also incur costs.

As noted earlier, the principle of school-based decision-making and interpretation of syllabus documents should be maintained subject to a system of accreditation.

1.4 Recommendations

Recommendations for assessment and pedagogical approaches have already been referred to in Sections 1.1 and 1.2. The following recommendations are for the specific syllabuses in relation to the general points raised in the Executive Summary.

Recommendation — Ancient History 2004

Emphasis on archaeology should be maintained and increased with particular reference to the impact of technology and the interpretation of sources as evidence. Critical inquiry must be maintained with more explicit links to the role of second-order concepts such as evidence, significance, cause and effect, change and continuity, perspective, empathy, and contestability in the study of the ancient world. More instruction that is explicit should be provided in guiding the interpretation of syllabus themes into classroom-based depth studies. Bridging and background studies should also be included together with the opportunity to study Medieval History in a semester unit.

Recommendation — Modern History 2004

More instruction that is explicit should be provided in guiding the interpretation of themes into classroom-based depth studies. Critical inquiry must be maintained with more explicit links to the role of second-order concepts such as evidence, significance, cause and effect, change and continuity, perspective, empathy and contestability in the study of the modern world. Bridging and background studies should also be included in context, local to international, and build on the Australian Curriculum History 7–10 focus on Australia in world history approach to ensure that suggested topics for inquiry are balanced (i.e. do not focus on only Australian and/or European history).

Recommendation — Geography 2007

More emphasis on the underpinning conceptual thinking embedded in the content is necessary.

Recommendation — Philosophy and Reason 2014

More scaffolding in terms of specific questions to prompt inquiry will assist teachers in interpreting the various philosophies in terms of different social, ethical and religious positions for classroom practice.

Recommendation — Study of Religion 2012

More scaffolding (as above) to assist teachers in interpreting complex social, political and cultural dialogues in relation to the role of religion positions for classroom practice.

Recommendation — Study of Society 2012

More scaffolding (as above) to assist teachers in drawing from the disciplines of sociology, social psychology and cultural anthropology in their social investigations.

Recommendation — Religion and Ethics 2014

Specific guidelines should be provided to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are embedded.

Recommendation — Social and Community Studies 2014

Meaningful appreciation for the teaching of cultural diversity needs to be recognised and possible strategies to support this be included.

2 Subjects in the group: Overview, comparison and connections

2.1 QCAA syllabuses and VET qualifications

Comparison with VET qualifications is not possible for this subject group. The following table summarises the commonalities and distinctions between the syllabuses. As can be seen, knowledge and understanding and thinking skills, including higher-order skills, are common across all syllabuses, but are not necessarily described in exactly the same way.

Ancient History 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and using an historical research process• Forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry• Communicating historical knowledge• Attitudes and values
Modern History, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and using an historical research process• Forming historical knowledge through critical inquiry• Communicating historical knowledge• Attitudes and values
Geography 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge• Analytical processes• Decision-making processes• Research and communication• Affective objectives
Philosophy and Reason 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dimension 1: Knowing and understanding• Dimension 2: Application and analysis• Dimension 3: Evaluation and synthesis
Study of Religion 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying and focusing on issues and phenomena (framing)• Investigating and researching issues and phenomena (investigating)• Analysing and evaluating evidence (reasoning)• Synthesising, making decisions and drawing conclusions; Advocating a position (judging)• Thinking on the learning and acting as a result of it (reflecting).
Study of Society 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dimension 1: Knowing and understanding• Dimension 2: Critical processes• Dimension 3: Communication
Religion and Ethics 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dimension 1: Knowing and understanding• Dimension 2: Applying and examining• Dimension 3: Producing and evaluating
Social and Community Studies 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dimension 1: Knowing and understanding• Dimension 2: Applying and examining• Dimension 3: Producing and evaluating

Recommendation

The above processes continue to be emphasised in each of the revised syllabus documents (and see recommendations in Section 1.4).

2.2 Comparable syllabuses from selected Australian and international jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Description
Qld	In Queensland, the separate subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Years 11 and 12 are all based on variations of inquiry-based learning and are all school-based assessment using various prescribed instruments/categories of assessment.
NSW	Inquiry-based teaching and learning. Assessment is via external Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination using a range of assessment items and formats.
Vic.	Inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning. School-based and external assessment across a range of assessment items and formats.
WA	Inquiry-based approaches for teaching and learning. Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) examination using a range of assessment items and formats.
Canada	Inquiry-based approaches using the concepts of disciplinary thinking. Assessment is based on content standards and an achievement chart for each course.
IB	Inquiry-based and emphasis on higher-order thinking. Internal and external assessment.
AQA, UK	Inquiry-based learning and external examinations.

2.3 Recommendations

See separate recommendations about the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum in Section 2.6.

As noted earlier there are common emphases on constructivist and inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning across the scanned syllabi. Given that the content, knowledge, understanding, skills and some assessment tasks are subject specific (i.e. a written report based on Field Work in Senior Geography) there are no issues of overlapping terms of content, learning or assessment. Issues could arise for those students whose schools allow them to enrol in several Humanities and Social Sciences subjects i.e. students who study Senior Ancient History, Geography, Modern History and Senior Study of Society in Years 11 and 12. This could raise issues of assessment overlap in terms of the number of research tasks and other assessment items due at once. However, individual schools usually mitigate against this practice via this school-based subject selection processes and permit enrolment in a maximum of two or three Humanities and Social Science Subjects.

See also recommendations in Section 1.4.

Similarities and differences between Queensland syllabuses and other jurisdictions

Ancient History: This subject is offered in three of the Australian jurisdictions under scrutiny — Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. There are many similarities between these jurisdictions including that they use a historical-inquiry approach and that they assess *Knowledge and understanding* as well as higher-order thinking skills through a range of assessment instruments. However, there are also some distinctions. In Queensland, archaeology is encouraged. This is more in line with the United Kingdom where the equivalent subject is named Archaeology. However, the United Kingdom's offering seems to be broader in scope. The difference for New South Wales is the offering of a preliminary course and an HSC course with more explicit instruction on historical concepts, such as perspective. No other jurisdiction appears to have a tiered course. Western Australia appears to have components of the Australian Curriculum such as the general capabilities, cross-curriculum priorities (CCPs) and historical concepts developed into their state-based offering. Ancient History is not offered as part of the IB program, is named Classical Studies in Victoria and is simply referred to as History in the Canadian subject where it is seen as a preparation course for university. All subjects regardless of nomenclature offer a range of themes that can be studied.

Geography: The national offerings of this subject are very similar. All jurisdictions focus on the physical and human dimensions of geography and the relationships between these. The focus on geographical inquiry is emphasised, with a choice of geographical themes to be studied through a range of assessment instruments. Higher-order thinking skills are prevalent, but with the underpinning concepts of place and space are made more explicit in Western Australia (in line with the Australian Curriculum) and specifically mentioned in the Victorian syllabus. The only difference is that Victoria offers a two-tiered course.

Similar to the national offerings, all the international jurisdictions mention the link between physical and human geography. There is slightly more emphasis in the Canadian document on active citizenship, although it is also mentioned in other documents. Fieldwork is given priority positioning in the United Kingdom's document.

Modern History: As with geography, the Australian syllabus documents for Modern History have similar underpinnings: inquiry, conceptual thinking and higher-order thinking taught through a range of themes and assessed through a variety of assessment instruments. Victoria, however, offers more choice with their range of assessment instruments.

The international jurisdictions also focus on historical inquiry with evidence of conceptual underpinnings and the assessment of higher-order thinking skills. Not surprisingly, Canada places more emphasis on American and Canadian history for the themes to be studied in preparation for university. The IB offers a standard and a higher-level course. All the international jurisdictions name this subject as History.

Philosophy and Reason: All the international offerings refer to this subject as Philosophy, as does Victoria. The subject is not offered in New South Wales and it is referred to as Philosophy and Ethics in Western Australia. Like other subjects from the Humanities and Social Sciences, there is a focus on inquiry and higher-order thinking. All jurisdictions that offer this course refer to philosophical debates, questions and analysis. Western Australia has more emphasis on ethics, as does the United Kingdom, which also mentions religion and epistemology. Canada makes specific mention of this course as a preparation subject for university study.

Study of Religion: This subject is referred to variously across the national and international jurisdictions: Religion (New South Wales); Religion and Society (Victoria); Religion and Life (Western Australia); Religious Studies in the United Kingdom and World Religions in Canada (university preparation) and for the IB. The focus across all jurisdictions is on world belief systems, ethical and socially responsible behaviours. Again, there is evidence of higher-order thinking skills, inquiry through a range of different themes and assessment instruments.

Study of Society: This subject is only offered in one other jurisdiction in Australia, namely New South Wales, where it is referred to as Society and Culture. In Canada mentions university preparation again where the subject is referred to as General Social Science. The IB uses the name Social and Cultural Anthropology and in the United Kingdom the subject is known as Sociology. As these names suggest, it is a cross-disciplinary subject encompassing anthropology, sociology and psychology assessed using a range of assessment instruments through a variety of themes, such as Culture and Identity (United Kingdom).

The remaining two subjects do not exist in other jurisdictions.

From this analysis, it becomes obvious that the overlapping focus areas are inquiry-based learning and encouraging the development of higher-order thinking.

2.4 Connections with the Australian Curriculum

Syllabus type	Syllabus	Path	AC subject
Authority syllabuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancient History 2004• Geography 2007• Modern History 2004• Philosophy and Reason 2014• Study of Religion 2012• Study of Society 2012	<p>Yes Yes Yes No No No</p>	<p>Yes Yes Yes No No No</p>
Authority-registered syllabuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religion and Ethics 2014• Social and Community Studies 2014	<p>No No</p>	<p>No No</p>

2.5 Implications for the revision of Queensland syllabuses

The following observations are made in terms of the implications of the relationship between Queensland and Australian curriculums for syllabus development.

When the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: Geography is mapped against the current Senior Curriculum in Queensland, even though the structure of the document is somewhat different and units are arranged in a different way, the content, for the most part, is comparable. For example, Unit 3 Environmental Risk Management could be aligned with the first theme from the Queensland document, Theme 1 Managing the Natural Environment, which encompasses Focus Units 1 and 2 — Responding to Natural Hazards and Managing Catchments respectively. Both documents emphasise the geographical inquiry approach for learning and teaching geography; however, the inquiry method that is used is somewhat different. Both documents also encourage the use of case studies at a local, national and global scale. However, there is more emphasis in the Australian Curriculum document on the concepts that underpin geographical understanding, that is, place, space, interconnection, change, scale, sustainability. The Australian Curriculum also incorporates the general capabilities and cross-curricular priorities that have been introduced in the lower secondary school. These are not present to the same extent in the Queensland curriculum, although skills like literacy, ICT and numeracy are encouraged.

Of concern is the lack of flexibility of the order in which the units are offered in the Australian Curriculum, whereas in Queensland teachers can choose which topics are taught at which time over the two-year course.

Geography emphasises:

- inquiry-based teaching and learning
- focus on key concepts that underpin the discipline of geography: place, space, change, scale, interconnection and sustainability
- a range of assessment items and formats underpinned by cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities
- incorporation of GIS and fieldwork into learning and teaching activities.

The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: Ancient History reflects the trend of the syllabus documents reviewed as it covers a similar time period, i.e. from the development of the earliest human communities to the end of late antiquity (circa AD 650) and incorporates a focus on inquiry-based approaches and issues related to the interpretation of primary and secondary sources as items of evidence about the past. The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum aims to equip students with the skills to engage with written and archaeological sources together with conflicting interpretations about their significance (historiography). Emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for students to understand the development of key institutions, structures and features of ancient societies; methods of archaeologists and historians; the impact of individuals in ancient societies; and how people conducted their everyday lives. The syllabus specifies content (knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught and learned) and achievement standards for the quality of learning (depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skills). This syllabus builds on the approach to developing historical knowledge and understanding and Historical Skills of the Australian Curriculum History F–10 (version before the 2014 review). These features are compatible with the current Queensland Ancient History syllabus.

Of note is the inclusion of an understanding of issues related to the ethical study, ownership and conservation of the past. It is suggested that this focus is included and emphasised in the revision of the Queensland Ancient History syllabus.

Of concern is the limited opportunity for introductory, background and bridging studies due to the lengthy suggested time allocation to depth studies.

The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: Modern History also reflects the trend of the syllabus reviewed as it covers a similar period i.e. from 1750 to the early 21st century. It develops an approach to the history of the modern world studied at Year 9–10 levels in the Australian Curriculum: History F–10 (version prior to the 2014 Review). Emphasis is on inquiry-based approaches to interpreting and evaluating primary and secondary sources from the past in relation to the significance of events, movements, individuals and groups that have shaped the modern world. The syllabus specifies content (knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught and learned) and achievement standards for the quality of learning (depth of understanding,

extent of knowledge and sophistication of skills). This syllabus builds on the approach to developing historical knowledge and understanding and Historical Skills of the Australian Curriculum History F–10 (version prior to the 2014 Review). These features are compatible with the current Queensland Ancient History syllabus.

Of concern is the limited opportunity for introductory, background and bridging studies due to the lengthy suggested time allocation to depth studies.

Both Ancient History and Modern History documents emphasise:

- inquiry-based teaching and learning through the *historical skills* strand with emphasis on skills associated with critical thinking the analysis of sources historical interpretation and contestability
- focus on key concepts that underpin the discipline of history, i.e. evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance , empathy, perspective and contestability
- use of a range of assessment items and formats underpinned by cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities
- utilise longer periods of time for in-depth studies than the current Queensland syllabuses, which then limit the number of topics to be studied in a two Years course. Note that concerns about the suggested time allocation for in-depth studies were raised during the ACARA consultation process as the documents were developed.

2.6 Recommendations

For Queensland Senior Geography, Senior Ancient History and Modern History syllabuses (and for the other Senior subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences suite) it is recommended that a subject-specific language be used to describe the *Knowledge, Understanding and Skills* to be developed in each subject.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the revised Queensland Senior Geography syllabus:

- maintain the focus on inquiry-based learning and teaching and associated geographical skills and that the inquiry method present in the current Queensland document is more straightforward than the method offered by ACARA
- have a greater emphasis on the concepts that underpin geography, with the concepts used in the F–10 Australian Curriculum documents applicable to Senior, and maintain progression from primary and lower junior to the senior years of schooling
- maintain the emphasis on fieldwork and the incorporation of GIS into the development of geography

- maintain opportunities for school-based decision-making and flexibility in the order of the units offered
- offer a range of assessment types such as response to stimulus essays, short answer and data response tests. However, it should be noted that at present there is too much assessment in geography. It is recommended that this is reduced.

Recommendation

It is suggested that the revised Queensland Senior Ancient and Modern History syllabuses:

- maintain the focus on inquiry-based teaching and learning with emphasis on skills associated with critical thinking and the analysis of the primary and secondary sources as potential items of evidence about the study of the past
- where appropriate include more emphasis on the nature of historical interpretation in terms of the ways historians work and contestability (historiography)
- incorporate more specific reference to the key concepts that underpin the discipline of history; i.e. evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspective and contestability, building on the Australian Curriculum History 7–10 Years
- maintain the time suggested for an inquiry-based depth study of 18 minimum school hours in the current Queensland syllabuses and suggest that two depth studies continue to be conducted each semester with the exception of Year 11 Semester 1 when one depth study is sufficient
- maintain opportunities for school-based decision-making about the inclusion of introductory, background and bridging studies each semester across the two-year course and also opportunities to continue the study of history through themes such as Studies of Conflict or Studies of Change
- for Senior Ancient History, include a greater focus on an understanding of issues related to the ethical study, ownership and conversation of the past and culturally appropriate processes and protocols associated with the retrieval and return of Indigenous remains to their traditional owners
- for Senior Modern History ensure that there are opportunities to inquire into Indigenous histories and topics related to Asia-Pacific histories (i.e. to ensure a balance of local and national Australian, regional, international topics available for selection for investigation).

3 Learning expectations

3.1 Scope of learning across Australian and international jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Scope of learning
NSW	<p>Modern History and Ancient History focus on critical reading and evidence-based interpretations of the past, but within periods, e.g. prehistoric and ancient societies through to the modern world.</p> <p>Ancient History topics focus on developing student understandings of the past through history, archaeology and science and range across the studies of ancient societies, sites and sources; the impact of significant personalities in ancient times; and specific historical periods.</p> <p>The Modern History timeframe commences with the period from the French Revolution and centres on modern world history and significant events from the 20th century and early 21st century. The syllabus identifies core studies (e.g. World War 1 1914–1919); a range of national studies (e.g. Australia 1945–1983 and Russia and the Soviet Union 1917–1941, amongst others); and the study of selected personalities in the 20th century and International Studies in Peace and Conflict.</p> <p>Geography focuses on environmental change and interactions between the physical/human worlds from a local to a global scale.</p> <p>Study of Society includes the social and cultural world exploring personal and social identity and intercultural communication.</p> <p>Study of Religion, Philosophy and Reason — n/a.</p>
Vic.	<p>Classical Studies focuses on investigation of sources and on the nature of societies in the western tradition, Greece and Rome.</p> <p>Modern History focuses on the analysis of primary and secondary sources of the past from the late 18th century to the present.</p> <p>Geography focuses on place and differences in place over time and space. Interaction between the physical and human environment is emphasised.</p> <p>Philosophy and Reason focuses on the themes and debates associated with metaphysics, epistemology, value theory and techniques of reasoning and argument.</p> <p>Study of Religion focuses on society, ethics and morality, search for meaning and challenges and responses.</p> <p>Study of Society — n/a.</p>
WA	<p>Ancient History focuses on early human remains and communities via analysis of primary and secondary sources from the past through to late antiquity AD 640.</p> <p>Modern History focuses on the analysis of primary and secondary sources from the 20th century but refers to significant formative changes from 18th century.</p> <p>Geography focuses on physical and human geography and the interconnection between them.</p> <p>Philosophy and Reason focuses on philosophical and ethical inquiry, ethical perspectives, ethics in human affairs and their application.</p> <p>Study of Religion focuses on the nature of religion, the influence of religion and religious inquiry.</p> <p>Study of Society — n/a.</p>

Jurisdiction	Scope of learning
Canada	<p>Ancient History is positioned under 'interdisciplinary studies' by the Ontario Ministry of Education in the context of Archaeological Studies. It includes methods of archaeological surveying, excavating, artefact collecting, and field interpretation. Students review the history of archaeology and investigate the development of archaeological theory. Using diverse research methods and field study, they also examine archaeological evidence in local, national, and/or international museums and sites; learn to analyse archaeological materials, apply data management skills, and create field maps and cross-sectional drawings of archaeological phenomena; and investigate archaeological careers and legal, ethical, and technological issues regarding archaeological investigation.</p> <p>Modern History courses are underpinned by the critical use of sources, historical thinking, historical significance and related concepts. Five Strands include the <i>Development and Interactions of Communities</i> (local, national and global); <i>Change and Continuity</i> (focus on American history); <i>Citizenship and Heritage</i> (American social, political and cultural identity); <i>Social, Economic, and Political Structures</i> (American society, economic development, government and law) and <i>Methods of Historical Inquiry and Communication</i> (research and interpretation and analysis).</p> <p>Both Ancient History and Modern History courses are underpinned by critical use of sources, historical thinking, historical significance and related concepts.</p> <p>Geography focuses on conceptual thinking in particular place, space and interconnections.</p> <p>Philosophy and Reason focuses on the big ideas of philosophy ranging from philosophical foundations, philosophical skills and their relevance.</p> <p>Study of Religion focuses on inquiries into world religions, traditions and beliefs.</p> <p>Study of Society focuses on the investigation of theories and concerns of anthropology, psychology and sociology including global social challenges.</p>
IB	<p>Ancient History — n/a.</p> <p>Modern History focuses on the nature of history as a discipline, its method, sources and interpretations and historiography.</p> <p>Geography has an international and intercultural outlook with an emphasis on higher-order and conceptual thinking.</p> <p>Philosophy and Reason focuses on the nature of philosophical activity as it applied to a range of sources.</p> <p>Study of Religion focuses on the nature of the human condition and core beliefs of a range of religions and their practices.</p> <p>Study of Society focuses on social and cultural anthropology together with ethnographies that explore multiple themes and topics.</p>
AQA	<p>Ancient History (Archaeology) focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology and its significance for locating and interpreting with sources.</p> <p>Ancient History (Classical civilisation) focuses on the study of primary classical sources to understand Greek and/or Roman society and values.</p> <p>Modern History focuses on the nature of evidence, significance of historical events, the role of individuals and the nature of change over time.</p> <p>Geography focuses on physical/human world interconnections and fieldwork activities.</p> <p>Philosophy and Reason focuses on epistemology, philosophy of reason, ethics and philosophy of mind.</p> <p>Study of Religion focuses on the studies of various religions to gain understanding of diverse, philosophical and ethical viewpoints.</p> <p>Study of Society focuses on sociology with particular emphases on culture and identity, beliefs in society and stratification and differentiation through the study of various topics.</p>

3.2 Recommendations

The following elements drawn from the international academic literature warrant consideration in the revision and rewriting of specific syllabuses.

Recommendation — Academic literature highlights for Ancient History and Modern History

The international literature places emphasis on the importance of historical thinking and reasoning about the past in the teaching and learning of history in schools. Students need to understand the distinction between substantive and procedural knowledge as foundational to studying history. Substantive, or first-order concepts, describe historical phenomena, such as *revolution, democracy, feudalism*, and so on. Lee and Ashby (2000) refer to substantive knowledge as the events, people, practices, ideas and movements that together constitute the subject matter of history. Procedural (second order) knowledge, on the other hand, refers to foundational building blocks of knowledge in the discipline (irrespective of the period in question). Peter Lee described procedural knowledge as, ‘organising ideas...that give meaning and structure to our ideas of the discipline of history’ (Lee 2006, p. 131). VanSledright (2009) refers to these second-order concepts as ‘knowledge-in-use’ (p. 435). Drawing on Seixas’s work, the Australian Curriculum History 7–10 identifies the following concepts as procedural knowledge: *evidence, change and continuity, cause and effect, significance, perspectives, empathy and contestability*.

The leading model of historical thinking is offered by Peter Seixas at the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, British Columbia, Canada. Seixas categorises disciplinary thinking in history with reference to six concepts:

1. establish historical significance
2. use primary source evidence
3. identify continuity and change
4. analyse cause and consequence
5. take historical perspectives
6. understand the moral dimension of historical interpretations (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.).

It is critical that students understand the nature of historical thinking concepts and acquire a vocabulary for using these concepts so they can think deeply and critically about how historians transform the past into history and apply this knowledge to their own historical inquiries. For example, one of the key concepts in the literature on historical thinking is ‘significance’ and it has been described in various ways. Phillips (2002), following Partington (1980), measures the significance of historical events by the extent to which they affected lives of people in the past or the extent to which they can explain situations in the present. Counsell (2004) refers to five criteria, namely: remarkable, remembered, resulting in change, resonant and revealing.

Something may be seen as remarkable by contemporaries or later generations if it has, at any time, been part of collective memory, had an impact on the long term, has been used as an analogy to something similar, or throws an explanatory light on some other aspect of the past. As noted, significance is emphasised as one of the ‘big six’ Canadian historical thinking concepts (Seixas & Morton, 2013) and it appears in the general aims for history in the English National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), into which it was introduced in 1995 (Wrenn, 2011). International research in the field of historical thinking reflects variations and modifications of this approach (see the work of Lévesque, 2008; Shemilt, 2009; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; VanSledright, 2009; Wineburg, 2001).

It is recommended that the revised Ancient History and Modern History syllabuses provide explicit guidelines to teachers in terms of how to embed, and distinguish between, substantive and procedural knowledge in the historical topic knowledge being investigated in depth (i.e. knowledge and information about an historical event or development). This could be presented in a topic diagram and inserted into the syllabus for each theme. For example, with reference to the QCAA Senior Modern History syllabus Theme 1: Studies of Conflict and the topic the ‘frontier in Australia’, as part of the background to investigate this topic students studying the reasons for, nature of and experiences of those who travelled on the First Fleet could consider the information in the flowing table.

Topic knowledge	Substantive historical concepts	Second order historical (procedural) concepts
Why the First Fleet was formed The composition of the fleet The nature of the journey Early experiences in the new settlement Contact with Aboriginal people	Colonisation Law Justice Transportation Emancipation Conflict Social Darwinism Racism	Evidence Continuity and change Cause and effect Significance

The international literature also suggests that students learn how to differentiate between first-order historical concepts (e.g. revolution or feudalism) and second-order concepts or ‘procedural’ concepts (e.g. evidence, change, continuity, cause and effect, etc.) when they study a topic in depth. While second-order concepts are not the content of a particular history topic per se, they are necessary to ‘do’ history. As Morton (2015) observed because procedural concepts ‘are seldom discussed in textbooks or presented in the works of historians, until recently they have been mostly ignored in school history’ (p. 17). Hence, syllabus guidelines are particularly important, given the aging demographic of teachers and the anticipated influx of new, less experienced teachers into the profession. The latter will require clear syllabus documents that articulate clearly how historical thinking and reasoning about the past can be developed in school-based depth studies. The emphasis on second-order concepts is increasingly emphasised

in the educational policy agenda of Ministries of Education in Canada, Europe and the US (see Morton, 2015).

A core element of historical thinking and reasoning about the past is the framing of questions to drive historical inquiry. The literature emphasises the importance of students constructing an understanding of the past through questions (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). History educators in the European Union (EU) and the US argue that the development of historical knowledge and understanding in history requires a predisposition to ask questions about the past and sources (Wineburg, 1998; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2004). Van Boxtel and van Drie (2008) classify historical questions according to four types: descriptive, causal, comparative and evaluative, while others (see Henderson, 2011) follow taxonomies prompting variations in levels of questioning ranging from comprehension, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application. Such higher-order thinking skills provide a basis for students to engage with the concept of contestability in the study of the past (Davies, 2011; Lévesque, 2008; Wineburg, 2001). The notion of contestability is also linked to historiography, which is clarified in the following section. The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: Ancient History and Modern History emphasise students engaging with the concept of considering contestability in their study of the past. It is recommended that the revised Ancient History and Modern History syllabuses continue the focus of the 2004 versions on the critical process of inquiry/use of sources and the framing of questions.

The literature also emphasises the need for students to understand the relationships between the past, present and future so history is meaningful and relevant to them. Research from the United Kingdom is insightful in this context. For example, the Usable Historical Pasts project in England investigated whether 14–16-year-olds made reference to historical knowledge when discussing contemporary and future issues. Foster, Ashby, and Lee (2008) found that the vast majority of students viewed the issue only from a contemporary perspective. There is other significant research from the United Kingdom and Europe indicating that students show a strong tendency to consider a contemporary perspective when studying history and make no connection between the past and present. Accordingly, students perceive the past as something that does not exist anymore and therefore has little value or significance as it does not affect the present (e.g. Barton, 2008; Blow, 2009; Lee, 2005; O’Malley, 2013; Savenije, 2014; Seixas, Peck, & Poyntz, 2011; Shemilt, 2009; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; Von Borries, 2011). The challenge for teachers is making the study of the remains of the past meaningful and relevant to young people.

The notion of historical consciousness is addressed in a growing field of international research situated at the intersection of historical thinking, public history and memory studies. It analyses the relationship between past, present and future and how students learn history in a disciplinary sense, and come to ‘think historically’ (Stearns et al., 2000; Wineburg 2001; Sandwell, 2006). Rüsen (2004, 2005) describes how, in the context of historical consciousness, the practice of daily life (*lebenspraxis*) interconnects with the discipline of history, which is understood as the

creation of meaningful narratives about the past. Rüsen refers to a genetic (i.e. ‘developmental’) approach to historical narration, whereby students understand change as central to the past in the present, and as the thing that furnishes history with meaning; or as Lee (2004) notes, we come to see that ‘people and things survive by, as well as through, change’ (p. 4). It is recommended that in describing the discipline of history, both Ancient and Modern History syllabuses include reference to the centrality of processes of continuity and change and utilise the term ‘historical consciousness’ so that young people can understand what motivated people in the past to think and act as they did and how this can cast light on the contemporary world and our lives in the present day.

The study of historiography (the study of the writings of historians and their use of sources) continues to be emphasised in the literature (see for example Fallace, 2009, 2012; Henderson, 2012; Lovorn, 2012; Parkes, 2009; Yilmaz, 2008). Historiography offers students a reading position that questions and interrogates historical representation, and positions histories written by a range of historians within the interpretive and methodological traditions that direct historical inquiry, in order to provide evaluative frames of reference for appreciating how such historical narratives were produced. Note that the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum: Ancient History and Modern History placed considerable emphasis on historiography in response to the international literature that suggests young people view the past as unproblematic. Historiography is identified within the sample focus questions for the themes suggested for study in the QCAA Senior Modern and Senior Ancient History syllabuses.

Sources

- Who are the major historians who have interpreted this conflict?
- How has this topic been interpreted by historians?
- What primary and secondary sources are available and valuable in this study?
- Are there any problems related to the availability or sufficiency of sources?

Further approaches could be added to scaffold student engagement with historiography, for example from Henderson, (2009, pp. 94–95):

Responding to historians writing about the Chinese immigrants in Australia in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

1. Use a copy of the following table to identify, where appropriate, how each of the historians has responded to the issues outlined in the first column. Select key quotations to support your interpretation.
2. After you’ve completed this table, consider the gaps — issues you could not identify clearly from the extracts selected. Record these for further inquiry. What other aspects would you like to investigate further? Why? What questions would you ask each of these historians if you had the opportunity to interview them? Provide a list.

Issue	Sophie Couchman	Ann Courthoys	Keith Windschuttle	John Fitzgerald
Sources of evidence about the Chinese				
Cultural differences between the Chinese and the colonists				
Interpretations of Chinese and European history in understanding certain attitudes and assumptions				
Stereotypes about the Chinese				
Racism				
The historian's standpoint on the significance of the Chinese in Australia				

It is recommended that, where applicable, the study of historiography is mandated as a core requirement for any depth study developed from the syllabus.

Recommendation — Academic literature highlights for Geography

The international literature cautions against fixed knowledges spelled out in national curriculum documents developed by many countries around the world, including Australia. Many see this as inert knowledge (Gardner, 2006) or curriculum for the dead (Ball, 1993). Lambert (2011) discusses geographical knowledge based on earlier work from both Young (2008) and Hirsch (2007). Young's (2008) approach focuses on notions of 'powerful knowledge', which he maintains incorporates deep conceptual understanding — 'intensive knowledge' to use Lambert's terminology. Hirsch (2007) argued for 'core knowledge' or 'extensive knowledge' — knowledge essential for effective skill development. Hirsch (cited in Lambert, 2011) states that 'the thing that transforms reading skill and critical thinking skill into general all-purpose abilities is...possession of general all-purpose knowledge. However, Lambert (2011) warns that core knowledge must be open to the ideas of understanding that may deepen and change through time. The Geographical Association's metaphor of learning as a language is useful here (GA, 2009). In their manifesto, they distinguished between vocabulary (geography facts) and grammar (concepts and frameworks) and maintained that both are necessary to speak geography fluently. Lambert (2011) maintains that geography students' capabilities improve through the acquisition and development of world knowledge; the development of inter-relational understanding, built upon a range of powerful concepts and enhanced decision-making skills about how places, societies and environments are made. Putting an intensive and extensive knowledge base together will lead students to deep quality geographical thinking. It is recommended, therefore, that 'core knowledge' for example factual locational world knowledge, needs balance with deeper conceptual understanding of patterns and processes and vice versa. Lambert and Morgan (2010) advocate teachers as curriculum makers using a capabilities approach with the need to use the

subject discipline as a resource to co-construct deeper conceptual understanding so students can make sense of their world and their relationship with it.

Many commentators have put various concepts forward as integral to the world of geography (QCA, 2007; Leat, 1998; Jackson, 2006; Clifford et al., 2009, Hanson, 2004). In Australia, the final set determined by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2012) were place, space, environment, sustainability, change, interconnection and scale. Key concepts give students a ‘powerful way of seeing the world’ (Jackson, 2006, p.203). They allow students to see beyond facts. Implicit in the word used to represent a concept is a vast array of background knowledge and ideas (Roberts, 2013). Taylor (2008, 2009) distinguished between ‘substantive concepts’ related to the content of geography, for example river or climate and ‘organising concepts’ such as place, space and scale. Organising concepts sometimes named second-order concepts, are not new, for example, the International Charter on Geographical Education (IGU/CGE, 1992) included location and distribution, place, people–environment relationships, spatial interaction and region. More, recently the Geographical Association in the paper ‘Thinking Geographically’ (2012) reduced the list to three namely place, scale and environment acknowledging that these organising concepts encompass other concepts such as location and scale. Sometimes the term used is nested concepts. Other writers such as Cloke et al. (2005) and Bennetts (2005) refer to everyday concepts and theoretical concepts. These writers believe that if students start with their own experiences (ethno-geographies, Catling & Martin, 2011) they will enlarge their understanding of the world making sense of the more abstract.

It is recommended that the revised Geography syllabus provide explicit guidelines to teachers in terms of how to embed, and distinguish between, substantive and organising concepts in the geographical topic being investigated. Such syllabus guidelines are particularly important, given the aging demographic of teachers and the anticipated influence of new, less experienced teachers into the profession, some without geography as a major.

The accepted model in the academic literature that is central to the method of learning in geography is geographical inquiry. Inquiry is not new, originating in the work of Dewey and Vygotsky in the first half of the 20th century. However, this method is still a core element in geographic thinking. Martin (2006) maintains that students ‘are actively engaged in the creation of personal and shared meanings about the world, rather than being passive recipients of knowledge that has been created or selected by the teacher’ (p.9). This could include the integration of fieldwork experiences or the use of ICTs particularly GIS. Inquiry provides students with opportunities to consider and examine, question, share, develop and expand their knowledge, as they become self-motivated independent learners (Catling, et al., 2013).

Traditional approaches to inquiry focused on five rigid questions (see Storm, 1989); however, Catling et al. (2013) maintain that in order for inquiry to innovate and excite, inquiries need to move beyond deductive questioning (description) to inductive inquiry approaches that are

analytical and evaluative. In this way, students will own the learning, develop crucial problem-solving skills and find intricate solutions to complex issues facing the world. Research from the US (A Road Map for 21st Century Geography Education) supports Catling et al.'s (2013) research, which gives special attention to the behaviours that comprise geographic thinking and problem solving. To be geographically proficient, students must formulate geographic questions, acquire, organise, and analyse geographic information, as well as explain, and communicate geographic patterns and processes (Bednarz, et. al., 2013). It is recommended that the inquiry approach follow these guidelines from the UK and the US.

Recommendation — Academic literature highlights for Studies of Religion, Philosophy and Reason, Study of Society, Religion and Ethics, Social and Community Studies

As these syllabuses draw on areas of knowledge that incorporate various traditions of knowing and societal norms and theoretical underpinnings, many of which are not discipline-based, the highlights of the international literature are presented in broad terms. In general, understandings of these subjects draw from sociocultural views of reality and it must be noted that there are less curriculum-specific empirical research papers to draw from than research available for the Senior subjects of Geography and History (Ancient and Modern), and Study of Religion.

The Study of Religion Syllabus draws from sociological approaches and aims to encourage a deeper understanding of society and people as social beings. Most syllabuses in Studies of Religion provide opportunities for students to engage with those classical, seminal sociological theorists of the late 19th and early 20th century such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx who were interested in religion and its effects on society. More recent prominent sociologists of religion students are encouraged to investigate include Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, Robert Wuthnow, Christian Smith, and Bryan Wilson.

Students can engage with traditional and more recent approaches to investigating religion's influence on a society in terms of its structure, law, politics, education, customs and artistic life. An assessment of these features assists students in arriving at a decision about the value of a religion and the nature of its impact on a particular society. Recent international literature and contemporary debates have centred on issues such as secularisation, civil religion, and the cohesiveness of religion in the context of globalisation and multiculturalism. According to James and Mandaville (2010):

Religion and globalization have been intertwined with each other since the early empires attempted to extend their reach across what they perceived to be world-space. Processes of globalization carried religious cosmologies — including traditional conceptions of universalism — to the corners of the world, while these cosmologies legitimated processes of globalization. This dynamic of inter-relation has continued to the present, but with changing and sometimes new and intensifying contradictions.

Several (current) studies of religion curricula in Australian schools are also derived from philosophical phenomenology. Phenomenological approaches aim to emphasise open-minded

observation and analysis without the influence of an individual's belief system. This effort to promote reciprocal fairness aims to provide teachers and students with an opportunity to understand each religion on its own terms. As Moore and Habel (1982, p. 63) put it:

As we proceed with the study of religion it is often important to 'bracket out' a whole range of admittedly important questions, such as, 'Does God exist?' 'Do harvest-increase rituals actually work?' 'Is there a life before life or after death?' 'Is religion an illusion?' But we bracket these questions out not in order to ignore them or dismiss them as irrelevant. We do so in order to gain an understanding of the phenomena or traditions from the point of view of the believers. Later we may return to these questions in a larger context and with a more complex understanding which will enable us to explore them with a greater sophistication.

In the late 1970s, Rummery (1977) proposed that the basis for an approach to the studies of religion in schools should be one that is 'relevant to the pluralist society which exists in Australia' (p. 279). More recently, Crawford and Rossiter (1985) argue that students can 'explore the meaning that religion, particularly their own tradition, has for people; they can reflect on contemporary religious and social issues; they can see how the study of religion makes a valuable contribution to their education and personal development' (p. ix). One of the most important scholars of religious studies, Ninian Smart (1927–2001), advocated multi-perspective and multi-dimensional approaches to the study of religions. Smart's seminal work, *Worldviews: Cross-cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (1981) anticipated the wide and important interest in the globalisation of religion and his shorthand expression for this was the use of a 'worldview approach'. Smart suggested seven multidisciplinary dimensions to describe the attributes of all religions. These include:

- ritual and practical dimensions, such as prayer forms and worship practices
- emotional and experiential dimensions, such as particular experiences that deeply influenced the religious founders and reformers of religious traditions
- narrative or mythological dimensions, such as important stories about the transcendent and worldly or human realm
- philosophical or doctrinal dimensions, such as the teachings and doctrines that followers are expected to adhere to
- legal and ethical dimensions, such as key values espoused by believers stipulating the behaviours expected by followers
- institutional and social dimensions, such as the ways in which religious traditions are institutionalised and operate
- material dimensions, such as structures and buildings, works of art and other creations together with the preservation of sacred places and artefacts.

Australian scholars Basil Moore and Norman Habel (1982) built upon Smart's work to outline a classroom-friendly approach to comparative religious studies, which identified types or foundations in all religions that could be used to scaffold or support the development of students'

religious understanding. Their approach draws on Smart's (1981; 1989; 1990) phenomenological approach and is very similar to it. However, this classification technique commences with the religious beliefs and traditions a student is familiar with and emphasises the need for a thoughtful translation of examples of their own culture to those in other cultures. Importantly, this typological approach emphasises that an individual's assumptions and perspectives can be challenged in unexpected ways as new cultural perspectives and theories of religion are encountered. Moore and Habel's (1982) typological components consist of:

- religious belief, such as the traditional views about the realities of the sacred universe, its structures and interaction between the range of significant and less-significant parts in this universe
- religious experience, such as the established ways in which believers enter into relationships with a spiritual reality within the confines of this religious tradition
- sacred stories, such as traditional narratives from a religious context that claim to reveal a sacred reality or truth via the structure, component and telling of the narratives
- sacred text, such as authorised documents, scripts or texts that claim to derive their religious authority from a supernatural source and mediating and communicating truth necessary to life or salvation
- sacred ritual, such as traditional and ordered sequences of communal actions in which a sacred purpose is thought to be achieved through an interplay between the sacred and the mundane worlds
- social structure, such as the visible institutionalised forms that express and maintain the life of the religious community
- ethics, such as the religious justification of social behaviour within the confines of a specific religious tradition
- religious symbols, such as traditional objects, marks, words, artefacts, gestures characters or events that claim to mediate and communicate a sacred reality that the symbol itself does not possess.

Feminist approaches to studies of religion investigate and critique androcentric (male-centred) and patriarchal frameworks that have influenced religious beliefs and practices. Feminist approaches search for evidence of women's contributions and religious roles, and emphasise a re-reading of religious scripture to raise issues of equity, justice and the nature of spirituality. Recent feminist inquiries (see the range of papers in journals such as *Feminist Studies of Religion*) incorporate the complicated and mostly under-examined issues of religion and gender underlying everyday news headlines in a range of global contexts. Some of the recent issues range from articles exploring concern for Hindus and Buddhists displaced in the Nepal earthquakes, especially children vulnerable to sex traffickers, to the white racist killing of nine African-American Christians who were gathered for church Bible study in South Carolina, US.

Historical approaches are characterised by a focus on critical inquiry, evidence, and notions of change and continuity. For example, a teacher may commence an investigation of a particular religion by focusing on some sources about its founder(s) and significant tenants in order to establish some evidence about the chronological development of the religion to the present day. This approach can emphasise the nature and extent of a particular religion's development over time and be useful in discussions about the ways in which religious beliefs and traditions evolve. As well, students can consider the ways in which specific events, such as the inquisition, impact upon religious beliefs and practices. Historical approaches can also draw on other approaches (such as feminist and sociological) and more recent international literature draws from critical and comparative approaches (see Antes, Geertz and Warne, 2010). This literature also relates to the following syllabuses.

The Religion and Ethics Syllabus presents a course of study that encourages students to explore their personal values and life choices and the ways in which these are related to their beliefs. Religion and Ethics helps students understand the personal, relational and spiritual perspectives of human experience. A search for meaning assists students from different cultural, social, linguistic and economic backgrounds to learn about and reflect on the richness of religious and ethical worldviews. Students are expected to engage with three significant aspects of human experience, namely personal, relational and spiritual, in relation to a minimum of four (of eight) electives that range across the Australian context to sacred stories and social justice amongst others. Examining associated religious, spiritual and ethical issues through an inquiry approach enables young people to gain knowledge and understanding of themselves as human beings and appreciate how their personal beliefs, values and spiritual identity are shaped and influenced by factors such as family, culture, gender, race, class and economic issues.

Study of Society uses sociology, social psychology and cultural anthropology, independently and together, to help students better understand themselves, other individuals, groups and institutions within society and across cultures. The subject explores the interaction between motivation and behaviour. The current Queensland syllabus is organised to address facets of the following on a semester basis: Unit 1 — Examining processes of socialisation of individuals; Unit 2 — Examining how culture is created and shaped by individuals and communities and how communities and individuals can shape society; Unit 3 — Examining how inequitable practices are established, sustained and challenged within and across structures in Australian society; and Unit 4 — Examining power and social change.

Each semester students are expected to engage in depth with at least one relevant theorist from the list identified in the syllabus. For Unit 1, relevant theorist are identified as: Asch, Cooley, de Beauvoir, Erickson, Freud, Kohlberg, Maslow, Mead (George), Milgram, Piaget and Vygotsky. Unit 2 identifies these theorists: de Beauvoir, Bourdieu, Foucault, Geertz, Malinowski, Mauss, Mead (Margaret), Levi-Strauss. For Unit 3, identified theorists are: an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander theorist, Arendt, Fromm, Gramsci, Greer, Habermas, Marx, Mill, Parsons, Spencer and

Weber. For Part A's focus on the sociological imagination in Unit 4, students need to engage with one of the following theorists: an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander theorist; Connell (culture, class and gender); Durkheim (power and social order); Foucault (power is productive and the idea of governance); Hall; Huntington; Lukes; Marx (power and conflict); and Weber.

Given this extensive focus on theorists, and the fact that those academic empirical studies based on interpretations of the work of such theorists do not relate to school-based studies of society, reference is made to the following claims of the benefits of teaching and learning in an interdisciplinary field such as Study of Society. This area of learning enables students to:

- learn about and solve individual and societal problems that are interdisciplinary in nature (Frazer and Rudnitski, 1995)
- understand significant connections in society by taking meaningful inquiries (Evans, 2000)
- provide opportunities to investigate and question issues of power and access in society and enable students in transforming their work through the impact of their thinking and actions (Ross, 2000)
- engage with communities as microcosms of reality ... to observe, to participate in , and to contribute to in many ways (Marsh, 1997, p. 207)
- develop student self-realisation as a member of society whilst fostering relationships, and sharpening their critical thinking about the nature of society through critical and creative thinking (Michaelis, 1988).

The above elements of teaching and learning in interdisciplinary fields apply to the Queensland Philosophy and Reason Senior Syllabus and to Social and Community Studies. The Philosophy and Reason syllabus combines the discipline of Philosophy with the associated skills of critical thinking and logic. It provides opportunities for students to understand the relevance of various philosophies to different social, ethical and religious positions, and to realise that decisions in these areas are the result of the acceptance of certain ideas and specific modes of reasoning. Social and Community Studies provides opportunities for young people to engage with significant questions about the ways in which their identities are shaped by life opportunities and influenced by factors such as culture, gender, race, class, belief systems and economic status. This subject fosters personal development and social skills that lead to self-reliance, self-management and concern for others. It fosters appreciation of, and respect for, cultural diversity and encourages responsible attitudes and behaviours required for effective participation in the community and for thinking critically, creatively and constructively about their future role in it. In particular, the syllabus addresses three core life skills areas — personal, interpersonal and citizenship — in the context of contextual electives (four from eight are required for study), which range from the Arts and the community, Australia's place in the world to money management and the world of work, among others.

While different types of learning are embedded in these syllabuses, the literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences field advocates the benefits of students engaging with critical approaches to inquiring and knowing about the world. Gilbert and Hoepper (2014) contend that subjects in this field provide young people with opportunities to develop new ways of thinking with which they can build their futures and that will stay with them long after they have left school. In the revision of the Studies of Religion, Philosophy and Reason, Study of Society, Religion and Ethics, Social and Community Studies syllabuses, it is important to build on the inquiry frameworks already established in these documents and to strengthen inquiry with a more critical approach. This is foregrounded as a recommendation so that young people studying these subjects learn to not only investigate taken-for-granted beliefs, assumptions and practices in society but also as citizens, learn how to challenge inequitable and undemocratic practices and participate in society in ethical ways to produce change. Young people need to go beyond problem-solving and develop their abilities to participate in decision-making processes and act on values such as social justice as life skills for the 21st century.

4 Future focus: 21st century skills

Through its own initial research, QCAA has determined a set of 21st century skills that reflect current educational trends.

21st century skills	Elements
Critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• analytical thinking• problem solving• decision making• reasoning• reflecting and evaluating• intellectual flexibility
Creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• innovation• initiative and enterprise• curiosity and imagination• creativity• generating and applying new ideas• identifying alternatives• seeing or making new links
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• effective oral and written communication• using language symbols and texts• communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences
Collaboration and teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• relating to others (interacting with others)• recognise and utilise diverse perspectives• participating and contributing• community connections
Personal and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• adaptability/flexibility• management (self, career, time, planning and organising)• character (resilience, mindfulness, open- and fair-mindedness, self-awareness)• leadership• citizenship• cultural awareness• ethical (and moral) understanding
ICT skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• operations and concepts• accessing and analysing information• being productive users of technology• digital citizenship (being safe, positive and responsible online)

4.1 Implications for the revision of Queensland syllabuses in the subject group

4.2 Recommendations

All of the skills named above should be included in the revised Queensland syllabi for Years 11 and 12. They should be mapped across the prescribed core and elective learnings. These 21st century skills should be embedded in relation to the teaching of content and processes as per subject areas. Greater emphasis should be made to engage students with digital texts and increase their communication and social skills in individual, collaborative and teamwork contexts.

Such skills should be aligned with teaching and learning and assessed in the context of specific units of work, e.g. embedding activities that foster imaginative as well as critical and creative thinking in case studies/depth studies. Formative and summative assessment should continue to include multimodal formats as well as oral and written. However, those 21st century skills associated with the affective domain of an individual's character, such as personal skills, should not be assessed.

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